

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 IO-12 DPW-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 RSR-01 /120 W
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R 031918 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 781

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

S E C R E T OTTAWA 0781

E. O. 11652: XGDS1 DECLAS 12/31/90 TAGS: MARR, PFOR, VS, CA
SUBJECT: VIETNAM- CANADA

REF: OTTAWA 740

1. IN CONVERSATION SUPPLEMENTARY TO THAT REPORTED REFTEL, ARTHUR ANDREW, EXTAFF DIRECTOR GENERAL ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS, MADE FOLLOWING POINTS OF INTEREST RE CANADIAN THINKING ON VIETNAM AND PARTICIPATION IN ICCS.
2. AS ANDREW INTERPRETS THE GOC DECISION, SATISFACTION OF ANY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS WOULD MEET MINIMUM GOC REQUIREMENTS TO CONTINUE IN ICCS BEYOND JUNE 30: IF THE LEVEL OF COMBAT IN SVN DECLINES, OR IF THE ICCS BECOMES MORE EFFECTIVE, OR IF RVN/ PRG NEGOTIATIONS SHOW CLEAR SIGNS OF PROGRESS. (OBVIOUSLY, THE GOC HAS LEFT ITSELF WIDE LATITUDES OF INTERPRETATION WITHIN WHICH ALL SORTS OF OTHER FACTORS, AND DOMESTIC POLITICS IN PARTICULAR, CAN OPERATE ON THE DECISION.)
3. ONE OF THE FACTORS HELPING TO DETERMINE GOC DECISION TO CONTINUE PARTICIPATION IN ICCS WAS THAT, JUST PRIOR TO HIS INDOCHINA TRIP, EXTAFF MIN SHARP SPENT SOME TIME IN TORONTO TAKING THE PUBLIC PULSE. HE BECAME CONVINCED THAT, CONTRARY TO OTTAWA OFFICIALDOM WHICH HAD REACHED CONCLUSION THAT ICCS WAS NOT WORKING,
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THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN CANADA WAS NOT AT ALL CONVINCED THAT ICCS WAS FUTILE EXERCISE AND BELIEVED THAT PEACE AGREEMENT AND CEASEFIRE STILL HAD FAIR CHANCE OF SUCCESS. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, ADVERSE DEVELOPMENTS WHICH MIGHT FOLLOW A CANADIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM ICCS WOULD BE BLAMED BY PUBLIC ON CANADIAN GOVERNMENT, AND THIS LOGIC CARRIED WEIGHT WITH SHARP' S CABINET COLLEAGUES.

4. IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT THIEU AND SVN FONMIN LAM, SHARP WAS TOLD THAT GSVN BELIEVED THERE WAS SOME POSSIBILITY FOR PROGRESS AND EVEN SETTLEMENT THROUGH THE TWO- PARTY NEGOTIATIONS FROM WHICH DRV WOULD BE ABSENT. THIEU THOUGHT THAT IF PROGRESS COULD BE MADE IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS IT WOULD BE EVIDENT SOON AND SETTLEMENT MIGHT BE EXPECTED BEFORE THE END OF 1973. WHILE SKEPTICAL, THE CANADIANS THOUGHT THE TWO- PARTY NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE GIVEN A CHANCE WITHOUT THE HANDICAP OF A CANADIAN WITHDRAWAL. IT WAS THIS CONSIDERATION WHICH LAY BEHIND THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH OF SHARP' S ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GOC DECISION TO PARLIAMENT:

" TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET- NAM THE AGREEMENTS ARE SEEN AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REMOVE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE IF NOT FROM THEIR TERRITORY, AT LEAST FROM THE NEGOTIATING TABLES, AND TO GIVE TO THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEAL WITH THEIR FELLOW SOUTH VIETNAMESE OF THE PRG DIRECT AND ACROSS THE TABLE WITHOUT INTERVENTION FROM THE NORTH. THE GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH VIET- NAM BELIEVES THAT IN A RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME IT WILL KNOW WHETHER THIS POSSIBILITY HOLDS ANY PROSPECT OF LEADING TO A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH VIET- NAM. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF THIS IS A REALISTIC ASPIRATION."

5. SHARP AND HIS TRAVELLING COMPANIONS WERE IMPRESSED BY TOUGHNESS OF DRV LEADERS WITH WHOM THEY SPOKE. IN PARTICULAR, THE CANADIANS TAKE VERY SERIOUSLY THE DRV' S DEDICATION TO THE VIEW THAT THE ESSENCE OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT IS THAT IT PROVIDES FOR REUNIFICATION OF VIETNAM BY PEACEFUL MEANS, AND THAT IF REUNIFICATION DOES NOT RESULT IT MEANS THE OTHER SIDE HAS NOT STRICTLY OBSERVED THE AGREEMENT AND REUNIFICATION BY FORCE WOULD THEREFORE
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AGAIN BE JUSTIFIED.

6. ANDREW PERSONALLY EXPRESSED LITTLE HOPE THAT HUNGARIANS AND POLES COULD MODERATE THEIR FASHION ENOUGH TO MAKE ICCS AN OBJECTIVE AND EFFECTIVE BODY. AT BEST, HE ANTICIPATES NOT MUCH MORE THAN TOKENISM ON THEIR PARTY, AND A SHOW OF COOPERATIVENESS WHICH IN TURN WOULD BE NEGATED BY DRV/ PRG WHOSE ACTIVITIES CANNOT BE INVESTIGATED IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS AGAINST THEIR WILL. HE HAS ALREADY DISCUSSED WITH AMBASSADOR GAUVIN THE LAST " FALL- BACK POSITION" FOR THE GOC ON ICCS. IT WOULD BE TO LINK INVESTIGATIONS, SAYING TO THE POLES AND HUNGARIANS " WE WILL AGREE TO INVESTIGATE THIS IF YOU WILL AGREE TO INVESTIGATE THAT." ANDREW ANTICIPATES THAT THIS FALL- BACK POSITION WILL EFFECTIVELY PARALYZE ICCS, WHICH WOULD HAVE THE ADVANTAGE AT LEAST OF NOT DEVOTING ALL OF ITS INVESTIGATIONS TO INCIDENTS RESULTING IN REPORTS CRITICAL OF GVN. ANDREW DOES NOT KNOW WHETHER, IF WORKING OFFICIALS SUGGESTED SUCH A TACTIC, GOC WOULD ACCEPT IT.

7. IN PASSING, ANDREW MENTIONED CLAUDE LEMELIN' S STORY, REPRINTED IN WASHINGTON POST, THAT USG ALLEGEDLY MISLED GOC ON TERMS OF PARIS AGREEMENT. ANDREW EXPLAINED THAT LEMELIN HAD CRUDELY DISTORTED COMMENTS MADE TO HIM ON BACKGROUND BY GOC OFFICIAL. IN FACT, THE OFFICIAL HAD TOLD LEMELIN HOW DIFFICULT WAS THE GOC DECISION TO SIGN ON FOR ICCS DUTY WHEN IT HAD ONLY SOME 24 HOURS IN WHICH TO ANALYZE THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND MAKE ITS DETERMINATION. THE TIMING OF THE STORY WAS ALSO LEMELIN' S, BECAUSE THE BACKGROUND INTERVIEW HAD BEEN GIVEN MANY DAYS EARLIER. ANDREW CONCLUDED THAT E THOUGHT THE STORY HAD BEEN THOROUGHLY KILLED AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR DAMAGE TO US- CANADIAN RELATIONS CANCELLED BY STATEMENTS ISSUED FROM CANEMB WASHINGTON AND THE FLAT DENIAL THAT THE STORY HAD " NO FOUNDATION" MADE BY EXTAFF MIN SHARP IN PARLIAMENT.
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** SECRET

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973OTTAWA00781
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730430/aaaahjhx.tel
Line Count: 156
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 OTTAWA 740
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06-Sep-2001 by freemaal>; APPROVED <02-Nov-2001 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971117
Subject: VIETNAM- CANADA
TAGS: MARR, PFOR, CA, VS
To: EA
SAIGON
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005